

Evaluation of Some Factors of Time Management among Civil Servants in Nigeria

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Abstract

In Nigeria and other developing countries, governments, due to lack of well developed private sectors, are carrying the bulk of the burden of socio-economic development at critical time schedules. Time is a valuable resource available to every organization. Time management is an essential component of the civil service as well as every organization. This study has evaluated the level of appreciation and adoption of the concept of time management in the Nigerian civil service. The paper has focused on the appreciation and adoption of the tenets of time management among the civil servants. The challenge of time management seems to be a missing link in the civil service. Time management ensures adequate and proper utilization of the available resources. This research is based on evaluation and survey research designs. The adopted sampling design was the stratified random sampling with equal allocation. The reliability of the research instruments was computed based on a pilot survey; and the instruments were found to be reliable. The results showed that the civil servants have low appreciation of the process of time management as well as low adoption of its principles. Hence, the missing link is obvious in the Nigerian civil service. Moreover, the civil servants have shown some traces of time wastage in their work. However, the problem of time management can still be corrected by training and sensitization.

Key words: Civil servants, civil service reforms, missing link, time management

Introduction

In Nigeria and other developing countries, governments, due to lack of well developed private sectors, are carrying the bulk of the burden of socio-economic development at critical time schedules. For instance in the area of employment, in most developing countries, the state serves as the biggest employer of labour (Lawal & Oluwatoyin, 2011). The state on its part relies heavily on the civil service to play its significant role in socio-economic development. The Civil Service is an arm of the executive branch of government that is responsible for policy formulation and implementation, development planning and implementation, control and regulatory functions (Abdussalam, 1989). Civil service is also responsible for the day to day operation of the machinery of government.

The Civil Service in Nigeria is of a colonial creation. The system bequeathed to Nigeria by the British colonialists, was narrow in structure and objectives, and meant to successfully extract financial and material resources (Anazodo, Okoye & Chukwuemeka, 2012). This makes the Civil Service to lack the much needed discipline, accountability and transparency. This is also the kind of civil service the Nigerian bureaucrats inherited after independence in 1960. Based on the structural defects of the Service, the bureaucrats, Anazodo et al. (2012) continued to argue; who occupied the leadership position in the Civil Service imbibed the colonial mentality of wealth acquisition for self-aggrandizement and self-superiority. This unfortunate scenario laid the foundation for the continuous abysmal performance of the Civil Service in particular and under development of the Country in general.

In the bid to position the civil service with a view to properly perform its aforementioned statutory functions and move the Nation forward, various governments in Nigeria, at various times, have made attempts to reform the Service. The reforms are essentially meant to improve the performance of civil servants so as to meet up with the challenges of civil rule, democracy, good governance and globalization (Ahmadu, 2007). Despite all the reforms, successive government regimes themselves are hitherto not satisfied with the performance of the Civil Service as it is currently fraught with inefficiency, ineffectiveness, indiscipline, red-tapism, bureaucratic bottlenecks, among others (Abdussalam, 1990). In fact, Ayida in Ahmadu (2007) is of the opinion that civil reforms, especially the 1988 one, have done more harm than good and would take patience and determination to restore the lost glory of the Service.

Since all human activities are tied down to time and past reforms in the Civil Service have failed to yield the desired result, it becomes imperative to focus on how civil servants utilize their working hours for which they are paid for. It is in this light that this study will focus on time management by civil servants during working hours. Despite the importance of time in the accomplishment of goals, all the past reforms have not

address the issue of time management in the Civil Service (Ahmadu, 2007). The challenge of time management seems to be a missing link in the reforms. The study will examine time management among civil servants. Bejide (2011) argued that effective time management broadly entails appreciation of the process, adoption of the principles and avoidance of time wastage. In the light of this argument, the paper will attempt to examine how civil servants manage their time during working hours and seek to achieve the following specific objectives:

1. Find out the level of understanding of civil servants of the process of time management
2. Find out the level of adoption of principles of time management by civil servants
3. Find out the level of indulgence of civil servants in factors leading to waste of time during working hours

Theoretical Framework

According to Ipinlaiye (2001), civil service refers to “the body of men and women employed in a civil capacity and non-political career basis by the Federal and state governments primarily to render and faithfully give effect to their decisions and implementation”. This definition is general and global while specific definition or composition of civil service is usually stated in the laws of individual countries.

Time refers to a non-spatial continuum in which events like work, relaxation, eating, sleeping etc occur in irreversible succession from the past through the present to the future (www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/time). Apart from irreversibility, Bejide (2011) further identified the characteristics of time of being very personal, of universal demand, untransferrable, valuable, cannot be increased, absolutely inelastic and cannot be stored.

In view of the above characteristics and indispensability of time in all human actions, time management becomes imperative. Ahmadu (2007) viewed time management as the process of delegation or allocation of the available time in such a way that the most important tasks are achieved before the less important ones. According to Hillary (2012), the process of time management involves planning, organization, coordination, control, and evaluation.

Effective time management requires adoption of certain guiding principles. According to Hisrich and Peter (2002) the principles include the desire to develop the required mindset for effective time management, effectiveness, analysis, team work, prioritized planning and reanalysis. In addition to adoption of the aforementioned principles, effective time management also entails identification of time wasters and making efforts to avoid or minimize them (Usman, et al., 2006). Similarly, Usman et al. (2006) further argued that time management can be leaned by realizing that; one can establish priorities that highlight his/her most important goals, what is important and what is not important. Also one can create time by realistic scheduling of time and elimination of low priority tasks.

Methodology

The target population of this study includes the entire Federal civil servants in Nigeria while a random sample of 300 civil servants in Nigeria was selected for the data collection through structured questionnaires. Furthermore, the research design adopted herein is an admixture of evaluation and survey research designs. Similarly, the sampling design is the stratified random sampling with optimum allocation. This research is based on evaluation and survey research designs. The study seeks to evaluate the level of appreciation, adoption and application of the process of time management using questionnaires to collect and analyze data from the target population.

Moreover, the adopted sampling design is the stratified random sampling with equal allocation. An effective survey strategy was adopted to minimize nonresponse, response error and respondents' bias to the barest minimum. In this strategy, follow-ups were made for the questionnaires not returned or not properly filled so as to maintain the effective sample size. This is the efficient survey strategy for optimal results. The sample consists of 300 respondents in two strata by gender as shown Table 1 below.

Table 1: Equal Stratification

| Strata | Gender | Frequency | Percent |
|--------|--------|-----------|---------|
| 1 | Male | 150 | 150 |
| 2 | Female | 150 | 150 |
| | Total | 300 | 100.0 |

Data Analysis

The statistical tools to be employed for data analysis include Cronbach's Alpha, t-test and descriptive statistics. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was employed for the data analysis. The questionnaires were tested for reliability using Cronbach's Alpha based on a pilot study with a sample size of 100 respondents. The Cronbach's alpha is a robust measure of reliability of the question items and typically varies between 0 and

1. Hence, the reliability of any research instrument or questionnaire is adequately measured by the Cronbach's alpha statistic. The closer the value of Cronbach's alpha statistic is to 1, the better the reliability. For this study, the reliability results are given in the table below.

Table 2: Summary Item and Cronbach's Alpha Reliability

| Strata | Alpha | N of cases | N of items |
|--------|-------|------------|------------|
| Male | 0.72 | 50 | 20 |
| Female | 0.65 | 50 | 20 |
| Total | | 100 | |

From table 2 above, the Cronbach's alpha of 0.72 and 0.65 for the research questionnaires for male and female civil servants respectively implies that the instruments are reliable and as such have requisite internal consistency.

Results

In this study, we used the t-test to test our research hypotheses. Since the questionnaires used were on five Likert scale, we used the one sample t-test with a threshold hypothesized test value of 3.0 to test the significance of each of the research hypothesis. At the 5% level of significance, the null hypothesis must be rejected if $p < 0.05$. The t-test is applied to test the three research hypotheses and the results are as follows.

Hypothesis 1:

The null hypothesis is that there is no significant appreciation of the process of time management by the civil servants against the one- sided alternative of less significance.

Table 3: T-test on the level of appreciation of time management by civil servants

| t | Test Value = 3 | | | Descriptive statistics | |
|------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| | df | Sig. (1-tailed) | Mean Difference | Mean | Standard deviation |
| 7.57 | 299 | 0.000 | 0.26 | 3.26 | 0.454 |

From the results of the t-test in the table above, since the $p = 0.000 < 0.05$, the null hypothesis must be rejected. Hence, there is low appreciation of the process of time management by the civil servants.

Hypothesis 2:

The null hypothesis is that there is no significant adoption of the principles of time management by the civil servants against the one- sided alternative of less significance.

Table 4: T-test on the level of adoption of time management by civil servants

| t | Test Value = 3 | | | Descriptive statistics | |
|------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| | df | Sig. (1-tailed) | Mean Difference | Mean | Standard deviation |
| 2.51 | 299 | 0.013 | -0.06 | 2.94 | 0.557 |

Similarly, the results above shows that since the $p = 0.013 < 0.05$, the null hypothesis must be rejected. Hence, there is low adoption of the principles of time management by the staff of Kaduna Polytechnic.

Hypothesis 3:

The null hypothesis is that there is no significant involvement of the civil servants in "time wasting" issues during working hours against the one-sided alternative of less significance.

Table 5: T-test on the level of time wasting by civil servants

| t | Test Value = 3 | | | Descriptive statistics | |
|------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| | df | Sig. (1-tailed) | Mean Difference | Mean | Standard deviation |
| 4.92 | 299 | 0.000 | -0.20 | 2.80 | 0.718 |

Similarly, the results above shows that since the $p = 0.000 < 0.05$, the null hypothesis must be rejected. Hence, there is significant involvement of civil servants in "time wasting" issues during working hours.

Discussions

In hypothesis 1, the results show that there is low appreciation of the process of time management by the civil servants. The civil servants lack the requisite appreciation of time management. On the other hand, in hypothesis

2 the results also show that there is low adoption of the principles of time management by the civil servants. The two hypotheses jointly show that staff members do not really appreciate the tenets of time management as well as lacking in the adoption of its principles. Again the results of hypothesis 3 show that there is significant involvement of civil servants in “time wasting” issues during working hours. This hypothesis answers a sensitive question. Therefore, we can deduce that lack of appreciation and adoption of the principles of time management could really lead to time wasting by the civil servants.

Conclusion

Time is a valuable resource available to every organization. The challenge of time management seems to be a missing link in the core civil service of Nigeria to ensure adequate and proper utilization of the available resources. The civil servants do not really appreciate of the process of time management as well as the adoption of its principles. Hence, the missing link is present in the Nigerian civil service. Moreover, the civil servants show some traces of time wastage by its staff. However, the missing link of time management can still be corrected by proper sensitization and training.

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